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LEBANON

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I. LAND AND PEOPLE

1. As a result of the 1975-1990 war, Lebanon lacks reliable statistics. The Central Statistics Office is currently being re-established, and official figures will be available in November 1996. The local offices of the United Nations specialized agencies and subsidiary organs are carrying out their own surveys in various domains, the results of which will soon be available.

2. The resident population of Lebanon is estimated at slightly more than 3 million, living within an area of 10,452 km^2. A strip of land in the south of the country, between 8 and 10 km wide and covering a total of nearly 850 km^2, is still occupied by the Israeli army, despite Security Council resolution 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978.

3. Annual per capita income is estimated at US$ 2,150.

4. Gross national product is estimated at US$ 6.2 billion.

5. The annual rate of inflation, which was 32.95 per cent in 1991, is currently 9.45 per cent.

6. The external public debt was estimated in November 1995 at 1,276 million dollars and the internal public debt at 6 billion dollars.

7. The unemployment rate is currently estimated at 10 per cent of the population.

8. The adult literacy rate, which was estimated at 80.1 per cent in 1991 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is improving. It is currently 94.7 per cent for men and 90.3 per cent for women.

9. The inhabitants of Lebanon belong to one of the officially recognized religious communities in the country. The size of each community is reflected in the number of seats to which each is entitled in the Chamber of Deputies under the electoral legislation currently in force. By law, the 128 seats in Parliament are distributed as follows:

Muslims

Sunnites	27
Shiites	27
Druzes	8
Alawites	2

Christians

Maronites	34
Greek Catholics (Melchites)	8
Greek Orthodox	14
Protestants	1
Armenian Catholics	1
Armenian Orthodox	5
Minorities	1
Total	128

10. The Lebanese mother tongue is Arabic, which is also the official language; however, much of the academic curriculum is taught in either French or English, depending on the establishment.

11. The average life expectancy is 68.1 years for men and 71.7 years for women (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) statistics).

12. The mortality rate among children under age 5 is estimated at 47 per 1,000 for boys and 36 per 1,000 for girls. The infant mortality rate (children under 1 year of age) is estimated at 29 per 1,000 (UNICEF, Beirut).

13. The fertility rate (average number of children born per woman) was estimated at 2.92 in 1995.

14. In 1988, an estimated 42.6 per cent of the population was under 15 years of age, 52.3 per cent between the ages of 15 and 64 and 5.1 per cent over the age of 65 (statistics of the League of Arab States, ESCWA).

15. The proportion of the population living in urban areas was estimated at 87 per cent in 1995; the rate of movement to urban areas for that year was 2.3 per cent (UNFPA).

16. In 1988-1990, women made up 27.2 per cent of the total labour force (United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), 1992).

II. GENERAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE

17. Immediately following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Lebanon was placed under French mandate (Category A) by the League of Nations. In 1926, Lebanon adopted a parliamentary-type republican constitution. In 1943, it gained independence and adopted an unwritten national Covenant based on the principle of co-existence between the country's religious communities within a united, sovereign and independent State, member of the League of Arab States.

18. Lebanon is a founding member of the League of Arab States and of the United Nations. In 1949, together with Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, it signed the Israeli-Lebanese General Armistice Agreement under

United Nations auspices and in implementation of Security Council resolution 62 (1948) of 16 November 1948. In 1958, it experienced its first internal crisis, brought on by events in the region which began with the Suez War in 1956, but it quickly recovered and resumed its economic expansion. However, shortly afterwards it had to deal with the repercussions of the Palestine problem, the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, the elimination of the Palestinian armed presence in Jordan in September 1970 and the arrival of new waves of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

19. Since 1975, Lebanon has experienced a series of armed conflicts fanned by foreign intervention. The Arab summits of Riyadh and Cairo (1976) decided to send an Arab peace-keeping force to Lebanon, which was soon to consist exclusively of Syrian forces.

20. In 1978, the Israeli army invaded southern Lebanon, shelling an area of 220 km^2 in which 358 villages were located. Security Council resolution 425 called for strict respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon and demanded the withdrawal of the Israeli forces. The Council also decided to establish the United Nations Interim Force in southern Lebanon (UNIFIL).

21. Lebanon was again invaded by Israel in June 1982. The Security Council then adopted resolution 509 (1982) of 6 June 1982, which "demands that Israel withdraw all its military forces forthwith and unconditionally to the internationally recognized boundaries of Lebanon". However, this resolution was not implemented at that time, nor has it since been implemented with respect to the strip of land along the border known as the "security zone".

22. On 14 September 1982, Mr. Béchir Gémayel, who had recently been elected President of the Republic but had not yet taken office, was killed by an explosive device. That same day, Israeli troops entered the western part of Beirut, and massacres were perpetrated in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila from 16 to 18 September. From 21 August to 3 September 1982, between 3,000 and 4,000 armed members of the Palestine Liberation Organization left Lebanon under the auspices of a multinational force established for that purpose through bilateral agreements between France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

23. On 3 September, following the non-ratification by the Lebanese Government of the agreement signed on 17 May 1983 with Israel, the Israeli army withdrew from part of the territories which it occupied, but without coordinating that withdrawal with the Lebanese army. Fighting broke out in the evacuated regions and massacres were committed, causing the mass displacement of large numbers of the inhabitants of those regions.

24. On 1 June 1987, Mr. Rachid Karamé, President of the Council of Ministers, was killed by an explosive device placed in the helicopter in which he was travelling.

25. On 23 September 1988, at the expiration of the presidential term of office of Mr. Amine Gémayel, the Chamber of Deputies was unable to elect a new Head of State. Minutes before leaving office, Mr. Gémayel appointed General Michel Aoun to head a military Government which, under the Constitution, was to govern until the post of President of the Republic was filled. As that appointment was contested by the Government in office, two rival Governments were set up (one of which was reduced to only three members of the armed forces).

26. On 22 October 1989, the Lebanese deputies met in the town of Taif, in Saudi Arabia, and adopted a document of national understanding which included political, administrative, economic, social, educational and military provisions and established a special relationship with the Syrian Arab Republic.

27. One month later, the newly-elected President of the Republic, Mr. René Moawad, was killed by a car bomb. In fresh elections, Mr. Elias Hraoui became Head of State. On 21 September 1990, the Lebanese Constitution was amended to reflect the Taif Agreement (document of national understanding). This did not put an end to the unrest and armed struggles; however, on 13 October of that year, the period of dual government came to an end. A first step in the return to peace was the disbandment of armed groups.

28. Beginning on 25 July 1993, over 60 Lebanese towns and villages were subjected to seven consecutive days and nights of intensive bombing by the Israeli artillery, air force and navy in response to action by the resistance movement opposing Israeli occupation of the south of the country. Over 250,000 inhabitants of the south were forced to leave.

29. A similar operation was initiated by Israel on 11 April 1996, causing the displacement of some 400,000 inhabitants to the cities of Sidon and, later, Beirut, where, as on the previous occasion, they are being housed in schools and public buildings.

30. Between 1975 and 1990, the wars in Lebanon left between 150,000 and 200,000 dead and 300,000 wounded, of whom half were disabled for life.

31. The Lebanese Government has several current priorities.

32. First, it must prevent any return to the conditions that caused or accompanied the 1975-1990 war, when Government authority was under attack from all quarters, including armed groups and a rival Government. It is therefore seeking the support of all political parties, whether they belong to the majority or to an opposition that accepts to play by the rules of democracy. This has become particularly important with the approach of the legislative elections scheduled for the autumn of 1996.

33. The Government also had to facilitate the return of the persons displaced by events, particularly those of September 1983, to their towns and villages of origin. It has therefore initiated a programme of collective reconciliation and subsidies for the reconstruction and repair of destroyed and damaged housing.

34. It must also rebuild the country's infrastructure, including public buildings, roads, ports, the airport, power stations, telephone exchanges and distribution networks.

35. At the same time, it must prevent a return to the galloping inflation that the country experienced from 1984 to 1993.

36. Lastly, with the help of friendly countries, it must seek a comprehensive, just and lasting peace with Israel.

37. The need to prevent a resurgence of unrest and simultaneously to ensure reconstruction and monetary stability explains the firmness with which the Government must sometimes refuse certain demands, such as excessive wage claims (the Confédération Générale des Travailleurs wants a 76 per cent salary increase) or the authorization to hold demonstrations.

38. The political structure of the Lebanese Republic is as follows:

39. The executive authority consists of the President of the Republic and the President of the Council of Ministers, who are joint heads of the executive, and the ministers. The President of the Republic is elected for six years by the Chamber of Deputies. He has no policy-making responsibilities. He may chair meetings of the Council of Ministers without the right to vote. He promulgates laws, ratifies treaties (with the consent of the Head of Government) and signs decrees, which are countersigned by the latter and by the minister concerned. He may, after giving prior notice to the Council of Ministers, refer legislation back to the Chamber of Deputies for a second reading and may also call upon the Council of Ministers to dissolve the Chamber before the expiry of its mandate if it declines to meet or if it rejects the budget in its entirety as a means of paralysing the Government.

40. The term of office of the President of the Republic, which is normally six years, has recently been exceptionally extended for a further three years through a special amendment to the Constitution.

41. The President of the Council of Ministers is appointed by the President of the Republic in consultation with the President of the Chamber of Deputies and following mandatory consultation with the deputies themselves.

42. The executive power is vested in the Council of Ministers as a collegiate body. Ministers may be chosen from among the deputies. The Government is politically accountable to the Chamber of Deputies and has the right to propose legislation, as has the Chamber itself.

43. The legislature consists of a single chamber, the Chamber of Deputies, which is composed of 128 members elected for four years by universal suffrage. The President and Vice-President of the Chamber, who are elected by the deputies, also serve for four-year terms.

44. The judiciary is independent. It is composed of the courts of first instance, the courts of appeal and a Court of Cassation, which has separate civil and criminal branches. An independent Council of State examines appeals for the annulment of administrative acts on grounds of illegality and proceedings brought to establish government liability.

45. In addition, a High Court has been established to conduct trials of presidents and ministers.

46. A Constitutional Council was established by Act No. 250 of 14 July 1993 in accordance with the constitutional amendment of 21 September 1990 (amending article 19 of the Constitution), with responsibility for monitoring the constitutionality of legislation and for ruling on challenges to presidential and parliamentary elections. Questions of constitutionality may be referred to the Council by the President of the Republic, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, the Prime Minister or a minimum of ten deputies. The spiritual leaders of the various legally-recognized religious communities also have the right to do so, but only on matters concerning personal status or freedom of belief, worship or religious education.

47. Any challenge to the constitutionality of an act has to be submitted to the Constitutional Council within 15 days of the promulgation of the act in question.

III. GENERAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED

48. All treaties duly ratified by Lebanon acquire mandatory force of law within the country simply by virtue of the exchange of instruments of ratification (in the case of bilateral treaties) or upon deposit of the instruments of ratification or accession (in the case of multilateral treaties). No further procedure is required for their incorporation into internal legislation. The provisions of those treaties which are sufficiently specific and concrete will therefore be immediately applied. Provisions which call for legislative or regulatory measures are binding on the State of Lebanon, which must then introduce such measures.

49. On 3 November 1972, Lebanon deposited the instruments of accession to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It therefore has an obligation to adopt the legislative, regulatory and practical measures required by these two Covenants.

50. The preamble of the Lebanese Constitution, adopted by the constitutional amendment of 21 September 1990, states in paragraph (b) that Lebanon subscribes to the United Nations Covenants and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

51. The authorities with competence in the field of human rights are the Chamber of Deputies (which includes an Internal Regulations and Human Rights Committee and a Committee on the Rights of the Child, both recently

established), the Council of Ministers, the Ministries of Justice, the Interior, Public Health, Social Affairs, Labour, National Education, Youth and Sports, Culture and Higher Education, the Environment, Information, Housing and Cooperatives and Displaced Persons; the National Social Security Fund; the parliamentary committees responsible for such matters; the municipalities; the Department of the Public Prosecutor (Procurator-General at the Court of Cassation); the Council of State; the Constitutional Council; the High Court of Justice, which is responsible for legal proceedings involving presidents and ministers; and the Economic and Social Council, which is being established under the Taif Agreement (document of national understanding).